



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Agencies Encourage Outdoor Enthusiasts to “Do The Right Thing”

Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area — April 3, 2020

The U.S. Forest Service has partnered with more than a dozen federal, state and local agencies in and around the Columbia River Gorge to encourage outdoor enthusiasts to “do the right thing” and comply with public health directives to stay home and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Public lands within the boundaries of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area are managed by several agencies and counties. Those agencies have temporarily closed lands and water access to adhere to state executive orders. Despite the closures, visitation to public lands has remained high, and last weekend, thousands of people converged again at parks, sites and trails.

Today, agencies are launching a social media campaign to ask the public to “do the right thing” by respecting these closures, which are in place to best protect the health and safety of the public, agency employees and first responders.

- Because of the high density of visitors, it simply isn’t safe for people to visit lands or for employees to maintain sites in the Columbia River Gorge while we are in midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Respect closures.
- Don’t circumvent closures by “bushwhacking through the backcountry” right now, as you are taking unnecessary risks that may put a strain on local law enforcement and medical resources. The Gorge has steep slopes and drop-offs as well as unstable rock formations that create off-trail hazards.
- Visiting public lands while facilities are closed leaves impacts on human health and the environment, as trash and human waste accumulates on the landscape. Each small action has a magnified effect when millions of visitors come, as they do each year in the Gorge.
- Don’t use creative access points to trails to get around closures – ad hoc parking creates other hazards for motorists and blocks access by emergency services.
- Remember, this is temporary. Trails and destinations will eventually reopen. Help everyone by doing the right thing for right now.

Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation and Multnomah County Roads Department are supporting the effort by updating messaging signs for those entering the Columbia River Gorge and temporarily placing barricades to limit access to highly visited areas. Local law enforcement agencies are increasing patrols in the area.

Campaign partners include:

- Clackamas County Sheriff's Office
- Friends of the Columbia Gorge
- Hood River County Sheriff's Office
- Klickitat County Sheriff's Office
- Multnomah County Commissioner Lori Stegmann
- Multnomah County Roads Department
- Multnomah County Sheriff's Office
- Oregon Department of Transportation
- Oregon State Parks
- Skamania County Sheriff's Office
- Wasco County Sheriff's Office
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- Washington Department of Transportation
- Washington State Parks
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District
- USDA Forest Service

Social media graphics are provided for free and the public is encouraged to share them widely.